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HIGHER INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN
GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN AN AGE
OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CRISIS

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Summary

The introductory part of this paper discusses several factors which dictate the need to place high priority on guidance and counselling services. These factors to mention few include:

- (i) the growing complexity in the occupational and organizational structure of society which makes it difficult for a person to assimilate and organize the data necessary to take a decision on the choice of a career.
- (ii) the increasingly rapid technological change demanding human adaptability and responsiveness
- (iii) the increasing national concern with the need to develop all human talent; and,
- (iv) the need for specialized training to obtain entry into jobs.

Related to the above factors, guidance is seen as a fundamental aspect of life long learning whose primary objective is to help the individual select appropriate studies, experiences, etc. and to guide the individual in making appropriate use of the information and technological facilities available to him. In line with this objective, guidance and counselling services are explained as essential services in education, employment, social and community services etc. Problems of modern society such as automation, population explosion, knowledge accumulation, communication and changing societal patterns make guidance as important for those undertaking a course of study, those outside the educational system, the employees, adults, the aged and other disadvantaged groups.

The main body of the paper discusses the role of higher institutions in guidance and counselling in an age of socio-economic crisis with specific approaches which higher institutions could take on in order to institutionalize and make guidance and counselling services a reality. Among the approaches highlighted are: Guidance and counselling staff development and training, undertaking research on testing measurements and evaluation instruments, designing and developing training programmes, collection and dissemination of information and providing advisory services to government ministries.

One specific proposal presented and illustrated in a diagram is the creation of a Centre for guidance and counselling services whose mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions and organizations to solve educational problems relating to subjects choice and course of study, individual career planning, preparation and progression. The centre may fulfil its mission by: generating knowledge through research, developing educational programmes, evaluating individual programme needs and outcome, operating information system and so forth.

And finally, the paper discusses the extent to which the role of higher institutions in guidance and counselling through the creation of a centre for example could: (i) minimize the social problems such as juvenile delinquency, school drop outs, drug abuse, crimes, and (ii) increase productivity and performance at work. These and other examples are explained to demonstrate the significant role that higher institutions could play in guidance and counselling services and their practical application needed in an age of socio-economic crisis.

Introduction

The need for Educational, Vocational and Occupational Guidance and Counselling services in developing countries is becoming more and more urgent for various reasons. The following are among the various reasons and/or factors which augment the need to establish and provide guidance and counselling services in institutions of teaching and learning, place of work, universities and training institutions, community and social services.

(i) Complexity: There has been a vast increase in social differentiation. An example of this growing complexity of society is the great variety of education and occupations. The African society is not only becoming more complex, but also more divided than ever before. That is separated into spheres of life and troubled by cleavages, strains and contradictions. An example of spheres of life in a society include: family sphere that is the domestic unit, nuclear family, kinship etc. social sphere-education, health, welfare employment exchange etc. occupational sphere that is the world of work, economic institutions of society the labour market etc. and leisure sphere that is recreational activities spare time occupation, political participation in a broad sense etc. The activities carried in these four spheres of life in a society bear social change and hence complexity.

(ii) Achievement Orientation: There has been a gradual shift from ascription criteria to achievement criteria concerning the allocation of positions, roles, functions, rights, duties, etc in society. This achievement orientation is related to the increase in mobility (social, occupationally, marital etc.) many more options are open to the individual, due also to the pronounced social differentiation. This shift from ascription to achievement is also a consequence of rapid social change. In traditional societies, the individual's position in society and in economy are primarily determined by ascribed criteria such as kinship, sex, age category, position held in the community, class etc. The individual personal wants, needs, abilities and achievements are of little importance. Ascription criteria represent a strong, stable and conservatory mode of social regulation.

In industrialized, market-oriented societies characterized by rapid social change and high mobility rates, regulations work quite differently. Developing countries are becoming or moving rapidly towards industrialization and therefore more achievement oriented than ascription criteria. The point here is that achievement plays a fundamental role in our kind of society today and achievement implies personal decision and choice. Hence the shift from ascription to achievement, coupled with the added complexity and changeability of society, dramatically increase the need for occupational guidance and counselling. The individual requires information and advice in order to expand his opportunities and his capacity to choose.

(iii) New increased responsibilities of Schools: The changing demand for education is forcing educational institutions to "diversify their educational products". This is what a manufacturing industry does in its product plans and strategies. Old products are improved and new ones are added as consumer tastes change. At present there is an increased demand on educational responsibilities to prepare nationals for the country's labour market. In this situation there is a philosophical constraint which impels the country to provide a variety of educational programmes to suit every person's interests, abilities and aptitudes. We need to guide the young people about making the right choice of the educational trade they have to follow in order to assist them to reach the top of the ladder in that track.

(iv) The changing structure of the world of work: Changes in the world of work include changes in positions, tasks and responsibilities in occupational roles. There are changes too which affect the occupation structures. Supply and demand of personnel in the occupations also are changing. These changes are affecting the availability of people for the labour market and because educational programmes always lag behind occupational qualification requirements the changes also affect curriculum requirements. It is the responsibility of an effective guidance programme to take an inventory of these changes in order to be in a better position to guide students, employees, job seekers etc. in making decisions about occupations.

It is also normal for people to want to change jobs and even professions irrespective of their age and the length of time they have spent working on the first career because of the changing structures in the world of work. This may also be necessary for a variety of reasons - health, change of environment need to acquire new skills or additional skills to supplement their old ones etc. Such people need proper guidance to ensure systematic and effective change.

(v) New Technology: With high or advanced technology, the whole concept of learning and of the working life span of the future may be different and the effect of technological changes upon each individual in the society may become dramatic. The point is that advanced technology carries with it implications for education and training the development of human resources changes in social structure and, therefore, the need for systems of guidance to assist persons understand and plan in accordance with the transformations taking place in their nations.

(vi) Occupational dissatisfaction: Guidance reduces the incidence of occupational dissatisfaction as far as choice of career goes by presentation of a pre-occupational entrance picture which reduces "occupational shock" as well as by making appropriate selection and placement of individuals into jobs where they could be appropriately utilized. Accordingly frequent changes of jobs (people moving from one job to another), low performance and productivity at work could be minimized if effective guidance and counselling services were provided.

To sum up, due to increased complexity, achievement orientation, new increased responsibilities of schools, the changing structure of the world of work, new technology, occupational dissatisfaction and many other factors, it is difficult for us to grasp and command the social world, and therefore to understand ourselves. Also it is harder to foresee and plan our personal future not only has understanding and planning become more difficult, they have also become much more crucial for the adjustment and quality of life. All this implies a growing need for guidance and counselling.

The concept of Guidance and Counselling

Guidance is a very broad term used to describe those services that aim at improving and maintaining a balanced environment for effective work or, in case the class-room. By environment here it includes both the physical and the social (other people) aspects of environment. The social environment includes factors and situations which result from the interaction among people and interaction between the individual and the physical and social environmental factors as well as the interaction within oneself.

While we talk of educational, vocational, occupational guidance and personal guidance or counselling, the distinction when offering guidance services is not really that clear except perhaps in the aim for the particular service to the particular individual. The use of the term 'vocational and educational guidance' reflects the historical origin of the guidance service rather than the difference in the types of services. These services are both existential as well as long term. They aim at helping the individual to take maximum advantage of his opportunities at present as well as in the future. For example, in a school, educational guidance program will have activities such as teaching study skills and time management which will help students to enjoy and take best advantage of their school life.

Problems faced by students and other clients include emotional stresses and strains, self understanding and awareness of one's potential, interests etc, decision making in terms of career and occupation choices and many others. Hence, services in educational and vocational guidance run simultaneously. For example while guiding students about course selection, study skills, interpersonal relations, etc. a guidance counsellor also helps the students to explore the relationship between these school experiences (academic and otherwise) and the world of work. And underlying both educational and vocational guidance, are services in personal guidance or counselling which have their primary emphasis and bias towards helping the client to emotionally cope with any present or future situations.

In short, guidance services are those services which help towards one's total development and optimum adjustment to the dynamic environments. Guidance services according to Humphreys, Traxler and North (1960) "embrace the cluster of activities or experiences which help the individual to grow in self-understanding to make wiser decisions, and to do increasingly effective planning" (pp.4-5). So educationally the services will help one to appreciate and see the benefits and advantages of learning. The emphasis here is on the use of effective learning skills, subject choice and subject combination and studying prospects for future education.

Vocationally, guidance services will help one to explore and systematize one's interests, inclinations, broad abilities and align these with the needs of the various working situations as well as to explore the career packages available to someone with a given educational background. In this context according to D.S. Arbuckle (1953), vocational guidance is the process of assisting the individual to choose an occupation prepare for it, enter upon progress and adjust in it. According to this definition, vocational guidance has a dual purpose. One objective is the full development and satisfaction of the individual in his work. The other objective is the promotion of the most effective use of a country's manpower resources. The vocational guidance officer at the employment service would serve these two objectives by taking available information about occupational development and about the particular individual and suggest the most appropriate kinds of career for him and the best way for him to prepare for a selected occupation or category of occupations.

While counselling or personal guidance according to counsellors of various orientations (Biswalo 1981) view counselling as the process which enables the individual to accept and to use information and advice, and, if necessary to accept an unchangeable environment and thereby to some extent change that environment without being overcome by it. The individual is counselled towards developing the best self that one can be and take the best advantage of one's total environment. The process helps one to be realistic without being pessimistic and self-destructive about one's academic/educational and vocational decisions. In the counselling process, the interpersonal relationship between the counsellor and the counsellee is of paramount importance.

It is therefore clear from what is said above that in a very broad sense, guidance services include almost all services which are directed towards human development. In a way, the concept may be looked at more as an approach or an outlook rather than as a technique. For example, a subject teacher who has the student's guidance needs in mind will not concentrate on teaching content only. He will cover activities which go beyond the subject content. He will be concerned about the student's motivation towards learning the specific subjects he will look at all the other 'hygiene' factors which may act as learning disturbances and enhance those factors which will help towards learning. e.g.- Is the student emotionally stable and alert? is he physically healthy? A school health clinic may be run not necessarily because there are sick children in the school but because the school realizes the negative effects of health problems on learning. Or, a school food program may be established mainly because the school management realizes the relationship between such physiological needs as the need for food and learning. The class teacher also does not teach the content just in terms of that subject but as it relates to other subjects, to vocations and to the student's overall needs and aspirations for the present as well as for the future.

All these things are not written into the school curriculum. But, because of the teachers' attitude and outlook, they are attended to within the context of his teaching.

Similar examples could be quoted in the case of working environment where the management has interest in the counselling needs of its personnel.

If we look at guidance services this way, we will realize that guidance and counselling are not isolated services which an education/training institution or an employment organization can assign to a department of an office with expert specialists. It is an interdisciplinary service which requires a certain type of an organization. Each member has a certain amount of responsibility and specialists are used mainly to facilitate effective existence of the whole establishment. The guidance specialists therefore should aim at promoting activities which will have a preventive rather than a curative effect on the educational vocational or social development of their subjects.

The above background has provided in general terms information on what guidance and counselling is all about and has indicated the various reasons why guidance and counselling services should be provided. Before we discuss the role of higher institutions in guidance and counselling services, it is necessary we review current guidance and counselling programmes and services available at the universities and other training institutions of higher learning among African countries.

Guidance and Counselling Programmes among African Countries

The various studies and field missions undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa have revealed the non-existence of guidance and counselling services in most African universities and other training institutions of higher learning. What exists in most cases is administrative and disciplinary in nature and very often handled by the university authorities and the Dean of students.

It is not enough for the Dean of students to handle students problems, but rather the university should provide facilities for formal and systematic provision of guidance and counselling services to cater for the various problems encountered by students. One of the most complex and least explored issue which influences academic performance is the critical problem of adjusting to university and urban life. Particularly freshman students from rural areas seem to find it more problematic than those from urban centres. Students from rural areas are in some cases uncertain and apprehensive of living in the city. According to a study (Patray 1982) undertaken on Liberia University students, for example, rather than attend medical clinics in the city, a student felt compelled to discontinue his classes and return to the "interior" to get "traditional medicine" for a malady allegedly due to African sign. In this case, it required several counselling sessions to bring the student to appreciate the simple cause-and-effect relationship involved in disease-hence the value of modern medicine. These and similar lingering superstitions tend to surface as emotional problems could present psychological barriers to scientific thought and hamper the overall academic functioning.

Financial hardships is another problem experienced by a large majority of students. To cope with financial hardships in some cases, many students take up a part time job. Not only does holding a job reduce the students' time for study but also does influence other aspects of students' academic life. Parental or peer pressure to pursue a given career, or to marry, or to take on family responsibility are among the problems that cause concern and worry among some students.

The above exemplifies the diversity of the students' problems which call for guidance and counselling services.

Very often many students complete their first degree at the university without having any idea of what they want to do as far as work is concerned. A number of students spend their first two years at the university changing from one course to another before they could choose and settle down on appropriate courses according to their interests and ability to cope up with the academic demand. This do happen because many of our universities and institutions of higher learning lack effective guidance and counselling services to deal with students' personal/social problems, financial and academic problems etc. as stated above.

If we accept the proposition that guidance and counselling complement the educational process in the effort to assist the student to understand, maintain, control, use, direct and develop himself for optimal being and effectiveness, then they should be readily available to all students. Indeed, for the university to maximize and facilitate the development of personalities capable of adding fresh insight to accumulated tradition, we need to realize that there are differences in ability, desire and emotional make-up which vitally affect the extent to which students can achieve. A corollary to this is an organizational pattern within which academic activity and counselling services are parallel thrusts with channels of feedback and interaction.

In a university with typically understaffed academic departments, the constraint of number tends to confine the functions of the faculty to instruction. They usually can do very little in the way of student advising except perhaps the once-a-semester mechanical assigning of courses to their advisees and signing of registration cards. Additional staff might be employed to offer support services to the guidance counsellor's office (where guidance services exist with an established office), such as preliminary interviews for screening, etc. Alternatively, the job description of certain of the present staff could be modified to subsume such services.

Higher Institutions and their Role in Guidance
and Counselling in an age of Socio-Economic Crisis

The political, socio and economic crisis in our environment is also seen in institutions of higher learning which contain students of every type of political, social, economic, racial and religious background. In addition, these institutions are faced with difference in the mental capacity, social maturity, and interest patterns of their students. Certain consequences are inevitable as a result of these individual differences among students.

Today, university authorities, professors and lecturers have to deal with numerous problems confronting the student as he/she seeks to assimilate all the changes brought to his/her surroundings by development. We are all aware of the university crisis caused by students' strike, destruction etc. and very often resulting in indefinite closure of the university. We need not cite examples of universities which have been closed or continue to be closed because this is a situation that is known to all of us. The causes of students strikes have political and socio-economic background and the consequences of such university student's activities also result into socio and economic crisis within the particular given country. Developing countries are experiencing economic crisis and they cannot afford to continue loosing their meagre resources if such university crisis are allowed to continue.

The concern is about how institutions of higher learning in each country in the African continent could make a determined effort to restructure the educational programmes and services to respond to the varying needs and aspirations and those of her citizens through some innovative approaches. The guidance and counselling service that has been discussed in this paper, while it would offer no panacea to all the socio and economic crisis, could create viable alternatives to previously unproductive conditions experienced by the young people and the societies. The question now is "What role in guidance and counselling services could institutions of higher learning play in an age of socio-economic crisis? Below are suggested approaches which higher institutions could make in an effort to minimize students' problems and maximize the utilization of university facilities available to the student and the society.

- (1) The establishment of guidance and counselling services. In the organizational structure of a university or an institution of higher learning, there should be an office of student affairs responsible for delivering or co-ordinating non-academic services necessary in the students life at the university and outside the university. A guidance and counselling office and its staff to man the services should be one of the offices and services to be created. In general terms, the aims and objectives of the guidance and counselling services (Brown, 1967) should be:-
- (a) to assist each student in making a smooth transition from high school to university/college.
 - (b) to assist students to function at optimum level within the university;

- (c) to assist students in preparing to face the challenges of life after leaving the university; and,
- (d) to develop among them planning skills through an understanding of personal decision-making, coping skills to meet different life situations, and the procedures involved in advancing from higher institutions to the world of work or from first degree to next degree.

These goals and objectives translate into the provision of academic, personal, vocational as well as social guidance. Students could be encouraged to seek the help of a guidance counsellor and be made aware of the services available before they face crisis or self-destruction. The services should be there as preventive measures but not necessarily for psychotherapy at the remedial level.

(ii) Guidance and Counselling Staff development (training). Since the question of staffing in the service is critical, institutions of higher learning and or universities (department of psychology, educational psychology, department of guidance and counselling etc.) will be required according to an ECA report (PAMM/AATD/ED/1/80) to play the following roles

- (a) staff development and research activities
- (b) staff development shall include the training of various specialists such as: occupational, industrial and social psychologists, counsellors etc.
- (c) pioneer and provide leadership in the development of new guidance and counselling techniques as well as the construction and development of respective test materials
- (d) render technical advice and guidance on new trends in the practice of guidance and counselling to practitioners.

In addition to long term training of guidance specialists, the relevant university departments can organize frequent in-service training programmes in which the training of counsellors is integrated in and paralld with normal work as a *ciybsekkir*. Through this interchange, a new possibility for personal development of skills that are connected with the counsellor's role is opened. The training of counsellors through the courses being offered at the university must have roots or reflect the African traditions. However, the trainees must also be given a basis for enabling themselves to relate critically to their own methods, through insight into a number of theoretical frames of reference. A counsellor must learn to see his role in interplay with other roles in the common social system of which his own school or college is a part.

(iii) Research Programme. A significant body of research on Guidance and Counselling in education is available in some African countries but the findings and recommendations of this research have not been adequately used by both scholars and educational policy and decision makers. One significant role institutions of higher learning and universities could play is to carry research activities and to make use of research findings. Such research work on guidance should not be confined to schools (primary, secondary and higher institutions), but to other sectors such as the employment services, in industry, in social and community services, in schools for special education in prisons, in mental institutions,

the aged and those retiring from formal civil services etc. For example serious attempt by way of research has not been made among African countries to find out how far problems of imbalances in manpower supply and demand can be solved partially through properly institutionalized guidance and counselling services.

Research efforts should help in the development of local job market information and a local occupational inventory of entry-level jobs for young people entering into the labour market. This could be done by a consortium of individual researchers at the university and information made available to schools etc. Ways and means could be established for keeping the inventory and the job market information up to date and reliable. Research efforts could also be made to investigate those sociological and psychological factors that create value systems and attitude relevant to the processes involved in educational and occupational decision making amongst students and other clients.

Further more, according to Sharma and Okon (1978), there is need to direct research efforts to:

- (a) evaluate the school programmes and services
- (b) conduct case studies
- (c) develop strategies aimed at fostering closer ties between education and the world of work
- (d) search for mechanisms and processes which could be effectively established to inform students about the relationship between their present education and their future occupations; and,
- (e) develop and test experimental work, community service opportunities and programmes which might have the potential to prepare students for smooth transition from college to work.

(iv) Tests/Psychometric. Tests are systematic procedure for attempting to bring to light relevant differences among individuals. Tests have the potential to reveal, in a reasonably, objective way, where, and how sizeable a person's strengths and weaknesses are relative to other people, and to help a person see more clearly where his/her interests, inclinations and potential satisfaction may lie. Few African universities have developed standardized individual and group tests which could be and some have been adapted to suit local situations. There is need to publicise these tests and to develop more such instruments in Africa so that educational personnel could use them for research purposes. Higher institutions should also engage in the development of other guidance tools such as Problem Inventories, Referral Forms, Vocational Information Booklet, Personality and Interest Inventories, Cumulative Record Cards etc. If developed and widely used, such tests and instruments can help counsellors to identify talents, aptitudes, special problems etc. of their counsellees. It is said that early identification of individuals talents and or potential is a sure way of planning developing and utilizing a country's human resources. This talent spotting procedure is quoting Dr. J.R. Hill (1973) "a case of emergency career planning but it has frequently paid dividends in that people with very high potential have been discovered doing relatively humble and poorly paid jobs, and then given much better opportunities".

Psychologists, sociologists, education professors etc. at institutions of higher learning would therefore need to build up a comprehensive library of tests for use in guidance and counselling, psychological services, performance appraisal and other assessment purposes. They in turn will also need to train a team of assessment officers in test administration and statistical processes so that tests are properly administered, scored and statistical data analyzed and interpreted meaningfully.

(v) Information (collection and dissemination). The provision of information is a critical important part of guidance and counselling services. Besides the university library which contains mainly text books, magazines and other information relevant to courses offered at higher institutions, universities would play a significant role by setting up a data bank for the collection and dissemination of information useful in guidance and counselling work. The information may include (a) Stimulus information designed to evoke interests in possibilities which the individual (counsellor) has not yet considered (b) comparative information which enables the individual to weigh alternatives against particular criteria and (c) specific information which enables the individual to explore a particular alternative in detail and possibly in due course, to pursue it.

The information may be transmitted to users through printed publications in a form of books, leaflets, pamphlets, bulletin, magazines etc. The printed information may range from career fiction and biography which can serve a stimulus function, to careers guides which provide comparative data on a variety of different occupations, to career monographs which provide detailed specific information about particular opportunities. Information could also be transmitted in a form of audio-visual aids which include films, videos, tapes, slides etc. As we all know audio-visual aids are excellent for several purposes such as to arouse interest, to increase awareness, to show the life-style of workers, to provide role-models and visual images of opportunities which are unfamiliar.

A third method of transmitting information is through the use of computer. Although computer machines are not yet widely in use in Africa, yet a good number of our universities in Africa are using and have computer facilities for various purposes. The computers have the capacity to store vast quantities of information; to retrieve it quickly and accurately; to match the information retrieved to the individual's attributes and preferences; to update information quickly and easily and to make accurate information immediately available to all users and to print-out information and provide "customised" copies for the individual.

Such a role played by universities and institutions of higher learning in collecting and dissemination of information to relevant ministries, schools, employment sectors etc. would enhance the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services. The provision of occupational information to job seekers and employees for example is very essential in eliminating the by-chance elements in occupational choices. Similarly, this gives job seekers, employees, students etc. the opportunity

to understand job requirements (for which they are applying), conditions and other information they need to know before making a decision for taking the job or undergoing the training required.

(VI) Centre for Guidance and Counselling Services. Consideration should be given for a national university or any institution of higher learning to act as a centre for guidance and counselling services. If this approach is feasible the university should have the capacity for: preparing curriculum units for public and private schools' guidance and counselling programmes; providing advisory services to relevant ministries in career development, personnel selection, designing of jobs and performance appraisal of people at work, assessment for training promotion; designing alternative guidance approaches for national planners; planning guidance, counselling, placement and follow through systems; preparing guidelines for research and development in guidance and counselling; researching the problem for transition from school to work and conducting surveys on issues in guidance and counselling as well as manpower requirements.

The above proposed approach of creating a center for guidance and counselling should in addition to the aforementioned functions aim at increasing the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning, academic preparation and progression etc. In summary the centre may fulfill its functions and objectives by: generating knowledge through research; developing educational programmes; evaluating individual programmes, needs and outcomes; installing educational programmes; operating information systems and services; and conducting leadership development and training programmes.

Below is a diagram that illustrates the wide range of capacities of the Centre. The diagram also reflects the reciprocal benefits growing out of a comprehensive institution or centre.

To give a general description of the diagram, for example, staff members involved in the work of the centre will generate knowledge and instructional materials through research and development in a number of areas including curriculum, analysis of job tasks, development of career-guidance systems etc. Staff may also be engaged in efforts to evaluate individual programme concerns and outcomes for people with special needs; install and disseminate career education programmes for all ages; operate information systems and service through exemplary programmes; assist in programmes for post-secondary students; and conduct leadership development and training programmes for key personnel.

In the area of development, the centre's mission will be to assist educational and business/industrial agencies in adapting research materials to field programme development. The centre and its clients will develop instructional materials specifically geared to target groups. While policy formulation/information dimension of the Centre's mission may involve identifying, examining and analysing key issues for policy formulation. The assembled findings and recommendations

The Capacities of a Centre for Educational/Vocational
Guidance and Counselling.

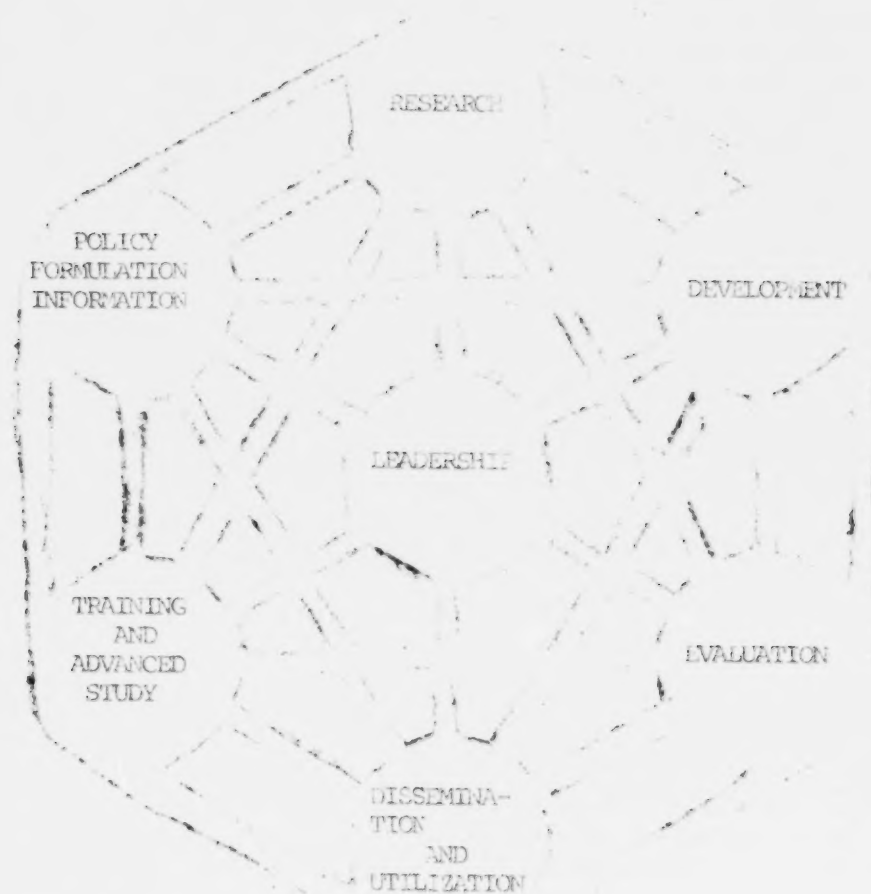


Diagram I: This shows the various dimensions which the 'centre' may be involved.

of these analysis may influence policy and decision makers through dissemination of publications and consultations. These and a host of other activities will serve the targeted needs of educators, economic planners, employers, policy makers and agencies concerned with all dimensions of human resource development.

Discussion

The role of institutions of higher learning in guidance and counselling services in an age of socio-economic crisis has been discussed in detail with suggested ideas and approaches put forward for consideration. If these approaches are feasible and could be effectively operated, to what extent for example would a Centre for Educational/Vocational Guidance and Counselling (if created) help in (i) minimizing social problems (e.g. juvenile delinquency, school dropout crimes etc.); (ii) elevating a country's economic activities; (iii) increasing productivity and performance at work; (iv) reducing unemployment problem; and (v) human resource planning, development and utilization? These are among the problems African countries are facing today.

In answer to this question, let us consider some of these problem areas in relation to guidance and counselling services.

(i) Minimizing social problems. Psychologists, sociologists etc. at higher institutions involved in the teaching, in designing programme content and developing instructional materials etc. as well as carrying out research would have to work closely with the ministries of social and community development, health and other relevant ministry departments by providing the necessary information, knowledge and skills to social workers, community field workers and others involved in solving problems confronting the youth. With the basic information, knowledge and skills imparted to the field workers, they in return will initiate programmes useful to the youth, community etc; make use of resources available to the community etc; assist individuals in their problems of adjusting in the community socially and economically so as to make them self-reliant and more productive in the conduct and execution of their affairs and activities in the society.

(ii) Increasing productivity and performance at work. At the university, one of the major objective is to prepare students for the world of work with emphasis on learning for productivity. At work place, higher institutions will have to work closely with employers, administrators, supervisors etc. by providing them with information, knowledge, skills, programmes, appraisal tools etc. (tests etc.) which guidance officers at work place could use to enhance worker productivity and job satisfaction. Higher institutions working together with guidance officers at work may administer performance appraisal (tests) of people at work, assessment tests for training, promotion and placement tests for recruitment of workers etc. In this way guidance and counselling services will enhance worker productivity and job satisfaction by, among other things eliminating man/job mismatches; promoting career growth and development; motivating and creating a work environment that is conducive to higher productivity.

Men and women (at work) can develop the concept of productivity through the provision of information; of opportunities for training and promotion of rewards and motivation and through the realization that in work there is honour and dignity. Through appropriate guidance and counselling programmes (designed by university professionals through research etc.) productivity and performance at work could be increased.

(iii) Human resource planning, development and utilization: Guidance and counselling services is being increasingly recognized and accepted among African countries as a sound base for human resource planning, development and utilization. Institutions of higher learning could provide advisory services to manpower planners and carry out research and or surveys in manpower needs and requirements of a country. By having the statistical data on manpower needs and requirements, higher institutions would embark on the training and development of the required human resources. Guidance and counselling services will then be required to: discover talents for training in specific areas and specialization, point out facts to youth who are planning and making decisions for vocational training etc. After training individuals are utilized for productive work. Utilization of human resources requires appropriate placement of individuals matching jobs with individuals skills and knowledge required for the job. Here trained guidance counsellors can assist in job placement where required by administering placement tests, interviewing, preparing job description and providing appropriate occupational information to job seekers, employees etc. Productivity and high performance at work can be obtained when individuals are appropriately utilized through appropriate placement of individuals at work taking into consideration their acquired skills, knowledge, information and attitude towards work.

If the above are taken into consideration and effectively operated, human resource planning, development and utilization as a critical input in the current socio-economic crisis could be improved through the assistance of higher institutions.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion to draw from all that has been discussed in this paper, is the practical application of guidance and counselling services to the society through the role that higher institutions may play. In most cases, university, psychologists, sociologists etc. in Africa have tended to provide the theoretical aspect (classroom learning) to students more so than the practical application of the psychological/sociological services. The proposed approaches discussed in this paper which higher institutions can initiate could provide the practical aspect of guidance and counselling as well as of the psychological services called for in an age of socio-economic crisis.

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